Reviewer's report

Title: Observations from behind the bar: changing patrons behaviours in response to smoke-free legislation in Scotland

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Reviewer: Wael K Al-Delaimy

Reviewer's report:

This qualitative study addresses a scarcely addressed topic of the social impact of banning smoking in bars. The interviews with bar workers were insightful and thought-provoking. Issues such as the fear of spiking unattended drinks of smokers when they leave to smoke a cigarette outside is the first in terms of the influence of smoking bans on patrons. The suggestion that older smokers are more likely to be influenced by the ban and smoke at home is also interesting as a social behavior change.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. There is however, lack of in-depth interpretation and discussion of these findings, as well as limited discussion of other comparative references. The authors state â##There has been little mention of this problem in other post-legislation studiesâ## but never cite or discuss such studies. What are the percentages of spiked drinks and what age group are most affected, who is likely to do it and what is the aim? The answers to these questions can help readers and policy makers assess whether this perceived risk is real or confined to this sample of bar workers/patrons. The authors could have provided their own solutions to this problem. There is lack of a thoughtful process to build on the findings and come up with some general consensus on how important are these issues.

2. The authors indicate in the methods section that interviews recounted the period prior and after the ban, yet the reader finds comments only from after the ban. A table with other less common themes might have been one possible way to cover this without overextending the word limit of the text. But inclusion of some common themes on the bar workersâ## thoughts in the period prior to the implementation of the ban would have been another appropriate way of presenting the data.

3. The issue of older smokers being more affected by the ban is reasonable to expect because of the cold weather and the time the study was conducted, but is there any insight on how this would be in a warmer weather especially that interviews recounted incidents and observations prior to the Winter time of the interview?

4. Many of the issues related to consequences of bar and restaurant ban on
smoking in Scotland must have had similarity to places that passed the bans years ago. For example, the State of California passed the legislation in 1994. There was no clear attempt by the authors to try and compare the observations of how such legislations might have produced similar behavior and how these behaviors evolved with time. This can be compared to office work bans where office workers have to stand out in a corner of the building to smoke during their break as a group. This reviewer found relevant data from the web site of Health Scotland. Even if there was limited qualitative data, general quantitative data can be very informative in synthesizing the results of this qualitative data.

5. Another aspect the authors are expected to address includes the possible negative consequences of having children in pubs. Although the bar workers perceived it in a positive manner, one should think how attendance of bars at an early age can be related to early drinking behaviors and whether this should be a concern that needs to be addressed.

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'